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Origin

NO. CIRCULAR CG-509

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New York Times on March 22 carried article under headline "Defense of Ground Pledged by McElroy". Article stated that at closed session of House Committee on Foreign Affairs on foreign aid program, Representative W. L. Hays had queried Secretary McElroy regarding the President's statement at press conference on March 11 on question of fighting ground war in Europe (with reference to Berlin situation), and that Secretary McElroy had replied to effect U.S. would fight with everything it has, including ground troops, if war broke out in Europe.

According Stenographic Record of Executive Session Hearings of House Committee on Foreign Affairs on March 18, 1959 on Mutual Security Act of 1960, Secretary McElroy made following response to question by Representative Hays:

Begin Excerpt from Stenographic Record

Secretary McElroy.... "The (NATO) shield has been built for the purpose of avoiding any ambiguous pushing or probing by the Russians or by the satellite forces which might chew off a little bit of territory here or a little bit there, if they run into no resistance. It then becomes a matter which involves national positions and negotiations and all the kind of business that could very well lead to a real fight to restore that boundary.

It is believed that if you were in a position to resist and to push back any incursion which is of what you might call "probing" force, you thereby avoid the kind of situation which might later develop into very broad conflict.

The President in talking about Berlin was saying this, in my judgment -- and certainly he made his position clear in my opinion in his television speech the other night, if it had not been clear before -- that if there is to be a real fight over Berlin that will require more than the forces that exist in the shield, then it will be a war to which the Russians have committed major forces; if they commit major forces, it will be a big war.

Mr. Hays. And it would be fair to assume then that we will

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3/30/59

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MAR 31 1959 P.M.

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use any and all weapons that we have available, including our ground troops, to repel that.

Secretary McElroy. That is correct, sir."

End Excerpt

House Committee is expected in due course to publish March 18 Hearings, possibly including some or all of this excerpt, but excerpt should be treated as classified until it is published. Only that portion of excerpt included in publication may then be considered unclassified. Meanwhile, addressee posts may, if appropriate occasion arises, draw on Secretary McElroy's statement, with attribution if desired, in conversations with officials of governments to which accredited. Posts should point out, however, that information regarding Secretary McElroy's statement should be treated as classified until statement is published by House Committee.

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